

UNDER A DARKENING SKY

must have seemed that the spirit of his dead friend lived again the Sienese maiden, and he now associated himself with her spiritual fellowship.

The two friars had spread Catherine's fame through Pisa, and she received repeated invitations to come thither, especially from certain nuns who greatly desired to see and to hear her, and who assured her that she could win many souls to God in that city—Stations that had been supported by a letter from no less a person than Piero Gambacorti, the ruler of the Pisan Republic, himself. Her answer to the latter, admonishing the upright man who was holding earthly lordship by so doubtful and unstable a rule, to detach himself from the delights of the world and keep eyes fixed upon Divine Justice in governing, is extant; at the time she excuses herself from coming, on the grounds of her bad health and the risk of causing scandal—relations being then somewhat strained between Messer Piero and the Sienese, in consequence of the refusal of the Pisans to help their nominal foes against the rebellious Salimbeni, whereas Florence and Lucca had loyally corresponded to their bond.¹

Nevertheless, early in the new year, 1375, Catherine believed herself to have received a divine command to delay no longer, and accordingly set out for Pisa. With her went Alessa, Lisa, Lucia, and others of her women, as also her mother, Monna Da herself, who would not again be parted from her daughter. Brother Raimondo, Fra Tommaso della Fonte, and Fra Bartolommeo accompanied her, to hear the confessions of those whom she was to convert to God.

At Pisa the little band of Sienese received a royal reception, first met by Piero Gambacorti himself, the Archbishop (Francesco Sodericotti di Vico), and the chief religious and political notabilities of the State. Catherine was entertained and lodged in the house of Gherardo Buonconti, a leading citizen of Pisa, and one of the large family of brothers and sisters, several of whom became disciples. The house stood on the Arno, near the little

Letter 112 (193). Cf. *Legenda*, II. viii. 17 (§257)? and *Cronica Senese*, 240.